

Guggenheim brochure

FRIENDLY WITNESSES

THE WORLDS OF **WARREN SONBERT**

Friendly Witnesses: The Worlds of Warren Sonbert represents an important aspect of the Guggenheim Museum's international film and media-arts program. In developing exhibitions devoted to independent filmmakers, we seek to place these artists and their accomplishments fully within the context of film history. At a time when artists working with film and video are receiving increasing attention in the art world, it is essential that the history of independent filmmaking be understood as a complex and important part of our culture.

In his films, writings, and teaching, Warren Sonbert articulated a profound belief in the filmmaker as an artist directly engaged in the social and cultural worlds through which he or she travels. He focused his camera on gestures and expressions that powerfully convey individual longings and the need for community, crafting this imagery through his brilliant command of editing into memorable compositions in time.

This exhibition and the preservation of Sonbert's work have been organized by the Guggenheim Museum with the Estate Project for Artists with AIDS and the Academy Film Archive. The opportunity to work with the Estate Project and the Academy to preserve and present Sonbert's films continues my longtime interest in this artist's remarkable achievement. As a curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art, I had the opportunity to work with Sonbert directly while organizing a retrospective exhibition of his work and including it in numerous Biennials. His development of a diaristic cinema and his sophisticated understanding of film aesthetics places his work in a powerful dialogue with the other arts.

I want to express my thanks and appreciation to Jon Gartenberg, guest curator for *Friendly Witnesses: The Worlds of Warren Sonbert*, who brought his skills as an archivist and film historian to organizing this research, preservation, and exhibition project. We are honored to be working with Jon, the Estate Project, and the Academy Film Archive to present Sonbert's restored films.

—John G. Hanhardt,
Senior Curator of Film and Media Arts



Top and Middle: *Where Did Our Love Go?* (1966)

Bottom: *The Tenth Legion* (1967)

Restoring the Legacy of Warren Sonbert's Filmmaking Enterprise

Friendly Witnesses: The Worlds of Warren Sonbert inaugurates a public reassessment of the creative and cultural legacies of experimental filmmaker Warren Sonbert. This postmortem reevaluation of Sonbert's career is made possible under the auspices of the Estate Project for Artists with AIDS. In late 1996, Patrick Moore, Director of the Estate Project, approached me about developing a pilot project to document the work of artists in the experimental and independent film community who had been afflicted with this deadly disease. We established a far-reaching initiative, involving the preservation, distribution, and exhibition of each filmmaker's work. Throughout this undertaking, we have endeavored, first and foremost, to acknowledge experimental filmmakers as artists, working within a larger creative and cultural sphere. We have also examined each filmmaker's entire body of work as a coherent entity rather than as a collection of individual films, a perspective that provides a greater appreciation for the artist's creative development and legacy of achievements.

Through this initiative, all of the internegatives from Sonbert's camera originals and original prints have been preserved by the Academy Film Archive in Los Angeles. The films shown in this exhibition are new prints struck from these internegatives. The Estate Project has arranged for these prints to be distributed by Canyon Cinema in San Francisco. Finally, this exhibition, another aspect of the Estate Project's undertaking, makes Sonbert's creative legacy available to the public.

Sonbert has typically been regarded as an avant-garde "diarist" filmmaker, yet a look at his creative output as a whole suggests that this is an oversimplified view of his work. A chronological reassessment of his entire filmmaking career—from his rarely seen first film, *Amphetamine* (1966), made when he was a student at New York University, through *Whiplash* (1995; completed posthumously in 1997 according to the filmmaker's instructions)—in conjunction with a study of the artist's writings and personal papers strongly suggests that Sonbert warrants a more substantial place in the larger artistic and cultural universe.

In addition to his substantial filmmaking enterprise, Sonbert was a prolific theoretician and critic. He possessed a keen intellect, and was both probing and playful in his revelation of the fundamental interplay between all the creative arts, including experimental and commercial film, rock and classical music, opera and poetry, and literature and painting. A survey of his estate's papers has uncovered extensive evidence to support this view. Among his papers are unpublished documents, including miscellaneous letters and diaries, travel itineraries, and detailed shot lists from his outtake reels containing annotations about film stocks, film speeds, and the tonal quality of individual images; published reviews of international opera performances, music recordings, and the

Hollywood cinema in such newspapers and journals as *The Bay Area Reporter* and *The Advocate*; transcripts of lectures he presented at the Pacific Film Archive, the San Francisco Art Institute, and other cinematheques and museums about his films in relation to the works of Stan Brakhage and Sergei Eisenstein, Douglas Sirk and Alfred Hitchcock, and Mozart and Elliot Carter; a screenplay adaptation of Richard Strauss's opera *Capriccio* (which Sonbert set in France in 1770, Germany in 1942, and contemporary New York); and an ongoing dialogue with both the San Francisco Bay Area poets and the New York art scene.

My first encounter with Sonbert occurred more than twenty years ago, when he was teaching film at Bard College and I was a curator in the Museum of Modern Art's Department of Film. I was involved in acquiring experimental films for the museum's permanent collection, and when I told him of my desire to purchase a print of *Amphetamine*, he flatly turned me down, insisting that the film no longer represented the kind of work he was making. He told me that I would be obliged to acquire his most recent film, *Rude Awakening* (1976). I now see that our initial contact etched the nature of our relationship in the ensuing years. It also defines the creative tension that exists between the avant-garde film artist and the film archivist: whereas the experimental filmmaker's greatest need is to sustain the creation of new works, the archivist's objective is to recover the artist's past creations in order to provide a context for the appreciation of his or her oeuvre.

The restoration of Sonbert's films has been complicated by his working process. In 1968, he began to cut apart the camera originals of his early films—including *The Bad and the Beautiful* (1967), *Connection* (1967), *Ted and Jessica* (1967), *The Tenth Legion* (1967), *Truth Serum* (1967), and *Holiday* (1968)—in order to incorporate the footage into an ever-evolving work-in-progress, which ultimately resulted in *Carriage Trade* (1972). Yet in systematically restoring Sonbert's oeuvre, we have discovered that he had struck reversal prints for most of his early works before he edited the camera originals, so we were fortunately able to preserve almost his entire filmmaking legacy.

The archivist's task has been further complicated by the filmographies that Sonbert prepared for the innumerable exhibitions of his work in the United States and abroad, in which he tended to eliminate mention of certain of his early films. In addition, while a number of films he made between 1966 and 1968 were first distributed by the Film-Makers' Cooperative in New York, when Sonbert transferred the circulation of his films to Canyon Cinema, his only early films listed for rental were *Where Did Our Love Go?* (1966) and *Hall of Mirrors* (1966). Primarily, he showed and promoted his work from the post-*Carriage Trade* period.

Shown in this exhibition for the first time in thirty years are films that were heretofore thought to have been "lost" from his oeuvre, including *The Tenth Legion*, restored in its entirety with its original soundtrack; a fragment from *Ted and Jessica*, a twin-screen film that was influenced in its formal structure by Andy Warhol's *The Chelsea Girls* (1966); and *The Tuxedo Theatre* (1968), a recently uncovered early version of *Carriage Trade*, found at the

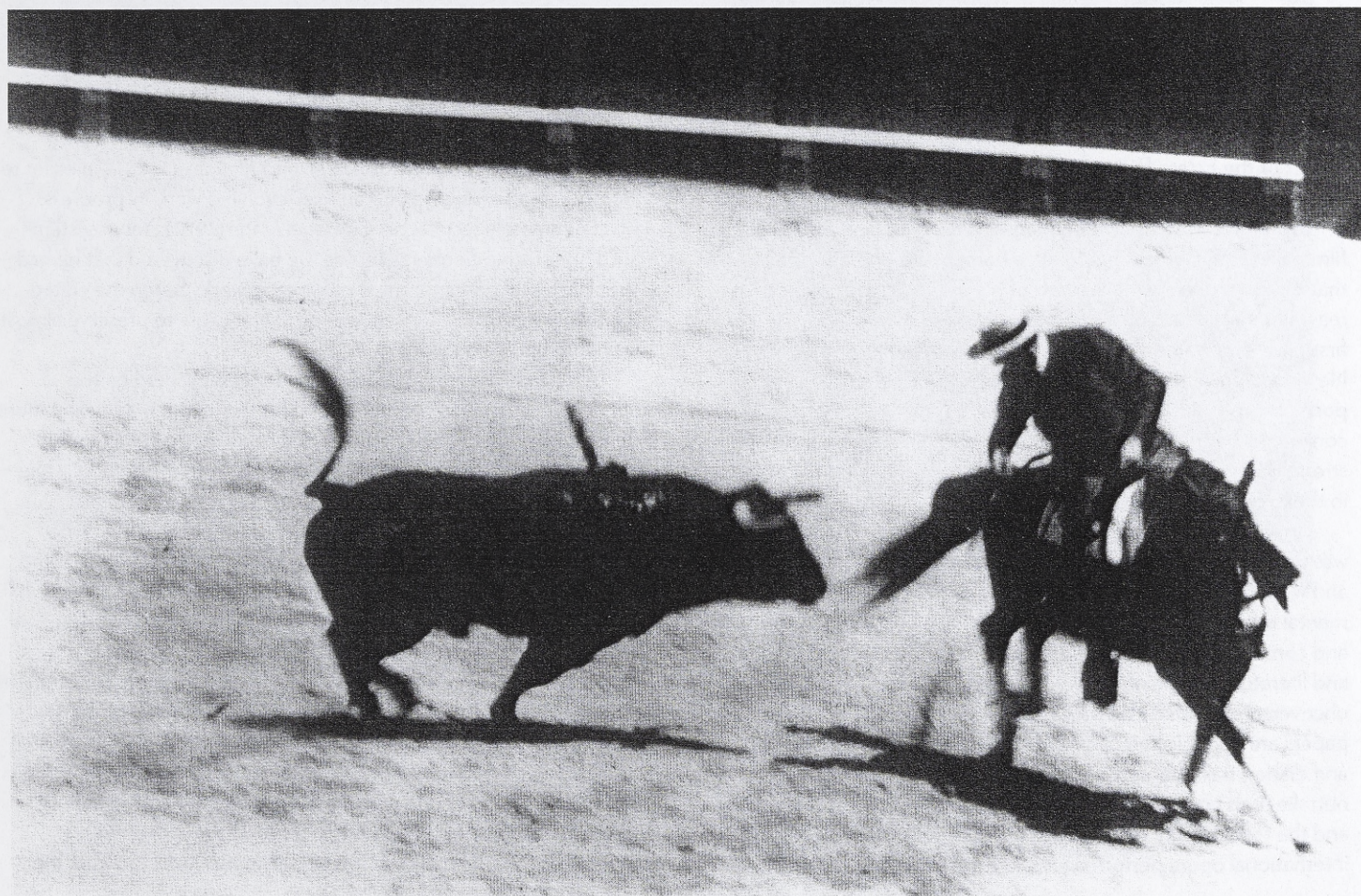
London Filmmakers' Co-op. These previously lost works—along with Sonbert's outtake reels (containing the raw footage from which he assembled his completed films), which have provided new insight into Sonbert's creative process—are the basis for a reevaluation of his career. Their restoration permits us to more systematically document and trace Sonbert's evolution from a fledgling student filmmaker unfamiliar with the operation of a motion-picture camera¹ to an accomplished artist who intentionally incorporated filmmaking flaws (such as under- and overexposed images and flares and exposed leader at the end of film rolls) into the fabric of his style.

Whiplash (1995/1997)

The Worlds of Warren Sonbert

Sonbert began making films in 1966, as a student at New York University's film school. His earliest films, in which he captured the spirit of his generation, were inspired first by the university milieu and then by the denizens of the Warhol art scene, including superstars René Ricard and Gerard Malanga. In these loosely structured narratives, Sonbert boldly experimented with the relationship between filmmaker and protagonists through extensively choreographed hand-held camera movements within each shot. The mood of these films was further modulated by chiaroscuro effects, achieved primarily through natural lighting (in both interior and outdoor shots), combined with variations in the raw film stock and the exposure and the use of rock-and-roll music on the soundtrack.

Sonbert's early films were shown at the Film-Makers' Cinematheque and at the Bleecker Street Cinema in New York, and he immediately received wide critical acclaim, including reviews in *The Village Voice*, *The Independent Film Journal*, and *The New York Free Press*. A reviewer in *Variety* wrote: *Probably not since Andy Warhol's "The Chelsea Girls" had its first showing at the Cinematheque . . . almost a year and a half ago has an*



"underground" film event caused as much curiosity and interest in N.Y.'s non-underground world as did four days of showings of the complete films of Warren Sonbert at the Cinematheque's new location on Wooster St. last weekend (Thurs.-Sun., Jan. 25-28). And as before, the crowds (many turned away each night) were attributed to press reports.²

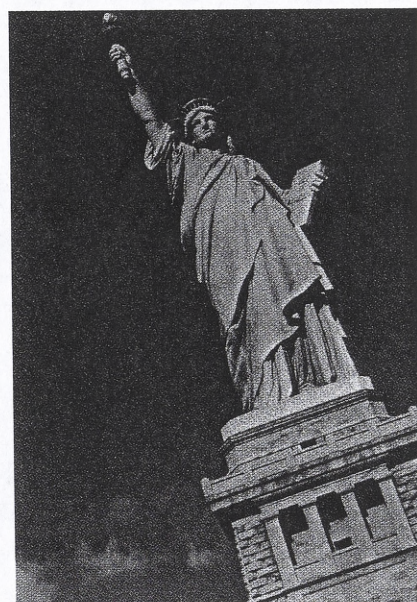
In the late 1960s, as Sonbert began to carry his Bolex camera on international trips, his cinematic strategy shifted to incorporate footage from these travels together with sections from his earlier films. This process resulted in his first major epic, *Carriage Trade*.

Sonbert's works from this period show him perfecting his ability to transform his early experiments into the more accomplished works of a mature artist by using his own distinct brand of "polyvalent montage," a technique in which each shot "can be combined with surrounding shots along potentially many dimensions. That is, this style begins in the realization that a shot may either match or contrast with adjacent, preceding or succeeding shots in virtue of color, subject, shape, shade, texture, the screen orientation of object, the direction of camera or object movement, or even the stasis thereof."³

He built upon his early experiments in camera movement, lighting, and framing to create brilliantly edited masterworks that encompass not only his New York milieu, but the larger sphere of human activity. In these films he commented upon such contemporary issues as art and industry, news reportage and its effect on our lives, and the interrelationship between the creative arts. *Short Fuse* (1992), for example, incorporates themes from the Strauss opera *Capriccio*, while *Noblesse Oblige* (1981) is patterned after Douglas Sirk's *Tarnished Angels* (1958). Like *Tarnished Angels*, *Noblesse Oblige* considers themes of flying and falling, and the way media reportage shapes public perceptions of people and events; it also contains shots of *Tarnished Angels* on video monitors and of Sirk himself conversing in a café.

During this period, Sonbert was developing a finely balanced system of film production. He would create his domestic and international travel itineraries based on operas he was planning to review as a professional critic, then he would arrange simultaneous showings of his films in the cities he would be visiting. On these extended journeys, often lasting weeks or months, Sonbert shot footage for new projects. Upon his return to San Francisco, he would assemble these shots on large outtake reels. These often incorporate a succession of shots of the same subject, revealing that he frequently filmed multiple takes, akin to practices in Hollywood cinema. After composing a reel, he would create a detailed typewritten shot list recording its contents.

During the years immediately preceding his death, Sonbert channeled all his energy into making his final film, *Whiplash*. Never discussing the nature of his affliction even with his closest friends, he tirelessly shot footage on a final trip to Spain in March 1994. (*Whiplash*'s bullfight imagery is from this footage.) On his return to the United States, his vision and motor skills



Short Fuse (1992)

impaired, he gave his companion, Ascension Serrano, detailed instructions about the assembly of specific shots and the music to be used as a counterpoint to the images. Before his death in 1995, he asked filmmaker Jeff Scher (a former student of Sonbert's at Bard) to complete the film, a process that involved literally trimming the ends of various shots that Sonbert had already assembled so that the imagery would conform to the rhythm of the music that Sonbert had selected. Scher's work was extremely consonant with Sonbert's working process: an inspection of Sonbert's outtake reels reveals that he spliced back into these reels individual frames that he had removed while refining the editing of each of his films.

Whiplash, which had its world premiere at the New York Film Festival on September 30, 1997, is a compelling, multilayered portrayal of the filmmaker's struggle to maintain equilibrium in his physical self, his perceptual reality, and the world of friends and family around him. In it, Sonbert articulated the ideas and values for which he intended to be remembered. Most important among these is the theme of love between couples, a subject he had explored in his earliest films, including *Amphetamine* and *The Bad and the Beautiful*.

Sonbert was able to transform, in seemingly effortless fashion, globetrotting diaristic footage into exquisitely modulated visual symphonies of ritual, performance, and suggestion. As he perfected his unique brand of montage from one film to the next, he used this editing technique to engage the spectator in the process of viewing his films. By doing so, he wished "to juggle disparate reactions in a struggle against viewer complacency and easily derived judgements."⁴ His model in this was not the "knee-jerk" reaction produced by Eisensteinian montage, but rather the "images and editing riffs of poetry" in Dziga Vertov's *The Man with the Movie Camera* (1929).⁵ Sonbert's strategy of actively engaging the spectator in the multifaceted readings of his individual works is perhaps his most enduring legacy.

FILMS IN THE SERIES

Program 1

Sonbert's Queer Aesthetic

Amphetamine (1966), Warren Sonbert and Wendy Appel, black-and-white; 10 min.

Noblesse Oblige (1981), Warren Sonbert, silent; 25 min.

Whiplash (1995, completed posthumously in 1997), Warren Sonbert; 20 min.

Of the many creative and cultural universes inhabited by Sonbert, none was perhaps more acutely experienced yet least publicly acknowledged than his homosexual identity and affliction with AIDS. This program examines Sonbert's relationship to the gay universe, beginning with his provocative and playful first film, *Amphetamine*, which depicts young men shooting amphetamines and making love in the era of sex, drugs, and rock and roll. The program continues with *Noblesse Oblige*, a masterfully edited work that weaves in imagery of protests in San Francisco following the murders of Mayor George Moscone and Councilman Harvey Milk at the hands of Dan White. It culminates with *Whiplash*, his elegiac meditation on his own mortality, a film that was completed posthumously according to Sonbert's instructions.



Noblesse Oblige (1981)

Program 2

Early Influences: Andy Warhol and Gerard Malanga

Where Did Our Love Go? (1966), Warren Sonbert; 15 min.

Hall of Mirrors (1966), Warren Sonbert; 7 min.

In Search of the Miraculous (1967), Gerard Malanga; 30 min.

Vinyl (1965), Andy Warhol; 64 min.

As a film student at New York University in the mid-1960s, Sonbert incorporated the avant-garde art scene of Warhol and his contemporaries into his filmmaking enterprise. This program pays tribute to these Warhol-era influences. *Where Did Our Love Go?* includes scenes from Warhol's Factory and the art-gallery world, and *Hall of Mirrors* features Warhol's superstars René Ricard and Malanga in more private and reflective moments. Sonbert's films are in vivid counterpoint to Warhol's stylized presentation of performance and identity in *Vinyl*. Particular attention in this program is paid to Malanga, with whom Sonbert collaborated in 1967, shooting footage for and briefly appearing in his film *In Search of the Miraculous*.

Program 3

Gregory Markopoulos as Mentor, Stan Brakhage as Hero

Rude Awakening (1976), Warren Sonbert, silent; 36 min.

The Riddle of Lumen (1972), Stan Brakhage, silent; 13 min.

Mothlight (1963), Stan Brakhage, silent; 4 min.

Twice a Man (1963), Gregory Markopoulos; 49 min.

This program addresses Sonbert's relationship to two filmmakers, Stan Brakhage and Gregory Markopoulos, both of whom deeply affected the way he thought about film and the evolution of his style. In the works of Brakhage, Sonbert saw the incorporation of the materiality of film (as in *Mothlight*), the treatment of light in relation to the lens and the objects being filmed (as in *The Riddle of Lumen*), and the use of a hand-held camera as a liberating device and means through which the filmmaker could express his subjective state of being.

Sonbert was befriended by Markopoulos while he was still a teenager. Sonbert stated, "I was [Markopoulos's] protégé for a while and he did open up this entire new world of films for me."⁶ *Twice a Man* exemplifies Markopoulos's repetition of the film frame in order to reflect the filmmaker's subjective experience. Sonbert adopted and modified this technique, taking the shot rather than the frame as his basic unit; films such as *Rude Awakening* are structured as an accumulation of disparate images, some of which are repeated.

Program 4

Intimate Couplings

The Bad and the Beautiful (1967), Warren Sonbert; 34 min.

Ted and Jessica (1967), Warren Sonbert; 4 min. (fragment)

Honor and Obey (1988), Warren Sonbert, silent; 21 min.

One of the most profound themes coursing throughout Sonbert's work is that of love between couples in all its pitfalls and perfect moments. To express this theme between the protagonists onscreen as well as in the relationship between his ever-roving hand-held camera and the human subjects in his field of vision, Sonbert employed diverse cinematic strategies, including in-camera editing (*The Bad and the Beautiful*), twin-screen effects (*Ted and Jessica*), and montage of discrete shots filmed in distinct spaces (*Honor and Obey*).

Program 5

Transformations of Style: From Mise-en-Scène to Montage

The Tenth Legion (1967), Warren Sonbert; 30 min.

The Tuxedo Theatre (1968), Warren Sonbert, silent; 21 min.

The Tenth Legion, which was originally thought to have been destroyed by Sonbert while he was making *Carriage Trade*, stylistically exemplifies the artist's masterful use of a constantly moving hand-held camera (as it trails the college-age protagonists in a choreographed fashion) and of chiaroscuro lighting effects in interior scenes.

Beginning in 1968, Sonbert abandoned his earlier filmmaking style, which had brought him such notoriety in the public press while he was still a teenager. He began using his hand-held Bolex camera to enlarge his field of vision beyond New York, recording footage as he traveled around the world. *The Tuxedo Theatre*, also recently rediscovered, offers heretofore largely unseen direct evidence of Sonbert's first steps in developing his unique style of editing, which resulted in *Carriage Trade*.



Program 6

Filmed Images as Found Footage: Stanzas of Music

Carriage Trade (1972), Warren Sonbert, silent; 61 min.

Short Fuse (1992), Warren Sonbert; 37 min.

After successfully integrating the language of film—composition, lighting, and editing—into a unique formal vision in *Carriage Trade*, in subsequent films Sonbert embedded these stylistic devices within a moral universe in which he provided cinematographic commentary on larger social issues. He frequently theorized about the relationship of film to other art forms, particularly music. He analogized the notes, chords, and tone clusters of music to the progression of shots in film. The shot was the building block upon which Sonbert created the musical rhythms of his films.

Sonbert published excerpts from his feature-film screenplay adaptation of Strauss's *Capriccio*, his favorite opera, in 1986. *Short Fuse*, completed six years later, can be seen as a return to *Capriccio*'s themes, including "Nazism and eroticism, beauty and force, detail and structure."⁷ Underscoring a question raised by *Capriccio*—whether in opera the music or the drama takes priority—*Short Fuse* is replete with a soundtrack that competes with the film's visuals, prompting the viewer to ask whether the music or the imagery is more significant.

Above: *Where Did Our Love Go?* (1966)

Left: *A Woman's Touch* (1983)

Program 7

Sonbert and Hitchcock: Narrative from a Woman's Point of View

A Woman's Touch (1983), Warren Sonbert, silent; 22 min.

Marnie (1964), Alfred Hitchcock, 35mm; 129 min.

Sonbert was known not only for his films and opera reviews; he was also a noted film critic. His writings about feature films are among his more extraordinarily profound and insightful creations. In them, he expressed admiration for a pantheon of American directors working within the studio system, including Alfred Hitchcock, Nicholas Ray, and Sirk. He deeply admired Sirk's ability to expose the "hollow cupidity and superficiality . . . of middle class ideals,"⁸ and to accentuate the forces of destruction rent upon the nuclear family structure of the 1950s. An indication of his enthusiasm for Hitchcock was his reputation for conducting tours for visiting friends, associates, and filmmakers of the locations around San Francisco used by Hitchcock while filming *Vertigo* (1958). In 1986, Sonbert gave a lecture at the Pacific Film Archive, in which he spoke of the "schizophrenic split" in *Marnie* between "images of [en]closure and escape,"⁹ representing the interplay between male domination and female independence; Sonbert paralleled these conceits in his own film *A Woman's Touch*.

Program 8

Cases in Point: Sonbert's Creative Interaction with Experimental Filmmakers Abigail Child, Nathaniel Dorsky, and Jeff Scher

Friendly Witness (1989), Warren Sonbert; 22 min.

Hours for Jerome, Part 2 (1980–82), Nathaniel Dorsky, silent; 25 min.

Reasons to be Glad (1980), Jeff Scher; 4 min.

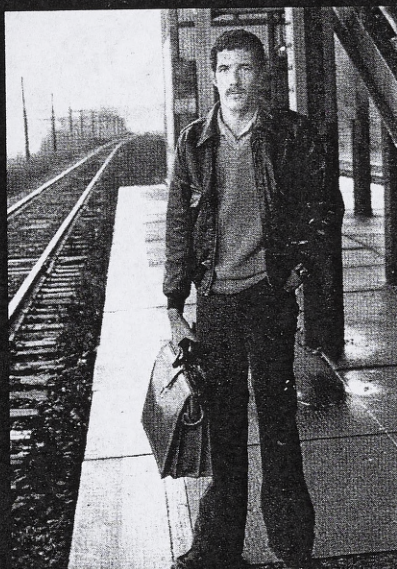
Mercy (1989), Abigail Child; 10 min.

Postcards from Warren (1999), Jeff Scher; 1 min. (world premiere)

Warren (1991), Jeff Scher; 3 min.

Friendly Witness, Sonbert's first sound film in more than twenty years, serves as a counterpoint to the works of a selection of experimental filmmakers with whom Sonbert engaged in an extended dialogue about filmmaking.

Dorsky appears in Sonbert's films, and similar imagery courses through both filmmakers' works. But whereas Sonbert accelerated the pacing of his montage, Dorsky extended the pacing of his shots, allowing a more lingering contemplation of his images. Sonbert wrote of Dorsky's *Hours for Jerome* that it was "simply the most beautifully photographed film that I've ever seen. . . . Here cinema enters the realm of the compassionate: capturing the eye and the mind in ways unlike the predictable arena of structural film."¹⁰



Warren Sonbert, ca. 1978.
Rhinecliff Amtrak Station, during
a teaching stint at Bard College

Photo ©Gerard Malanga,
courtesy of the artist

In *Mercy*, Child brilliantly interweaves found footage and freshly shot material, counterpointing "the public and private visions of technological and romantic invention."¹¹ The film's iconography of explosions, street scenes, amusement-park rides, marches, and couples kissing; its patterns of repeated imagery; and its play with the materiality of film—including scratches, varying exposures, and the combined use of black-and-white and color—evoke the worlds Sonbert created in his films. Child also extends Sonbert's investigation into the relationship between music and image, incorporating radically edited sound material that parallels in density and intensity her filmed images.

Scher, who has made experimental films, trailers, advertising films, and a narrative feature film (*Prisoners of Inertia* [1989]), is best known for his fecund creativity in the animation process. In *Reasons to be Glad*, thousands of hand drawings shown in succession create a Sonbert-like world of gesture and suggestion: a circus performer on a tightrope, a man splitting wood, a woman baking. *Postcards from Warren* (which has its world premiere here) pays affectionate homage to Sonbert's globetrotting endeavors by creating an original collage from postcards that Sonbert sent to Scher over the course of their more than twenty-year friendship and collaboration. The film expands upon Sonbert's description of *Carriage Trade* as "a jig-saw puzzle of postcards to produce varied displaced effects."¹² Finally, in Scher's *Warren*, Sonbert's protégé deftly turns the observational tables on his mentor in a simultaneously humorous and nostalgic fashion.

—Jon Gartenberg, Exhibition Guest Curator

SCREENING SCHEDULE

All films are presented in the Peter B. Lewis Theater at The Sackler Center for Arts Education in the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Avenue (at 89th Street). Tickets are free with museum admission and are available on the day of the screening at the admissions desk.

For updated information, please call (212) 360-4321. To receive upcoming Guggenheim film mailings, please call (212) 360-4236.

All works are 16mm film, color, and sound, unless otherwise noted.

Wednesday, April 21, 6:00 p.m.

Program 1
Sonbert's Queer Aesthetic

Friday, April 23, 3:00 p.m.

Program 1
Sonbert's Queer Aesthetic

Friday, April 23, 7:00 p.m.

Program 2
Early Influences: Andy Warhol and Gerard Malanga

Saturday, April 24, 3:00 p.m.

Program 2
Early Influences: Andy Warhol and Gerard Malanga

Saturday, April 24, 7:00 p.m.

Program 3
Gregory Markopoulos as Mentor, Stan Brakhage as Hero

Wednesday, April 28, 2:30 p.m.

Program 4
Intimate Couplings

Wednesday, April 28, 6:00 p.m.

"Rude Awakening: Restoring Warren Sonbert's Legacy" Panel discussion featuring guest curator Jon Gartenberg, Michael Friend, Director, and Mike Pogorzelski, Archivist, Academy Film Archive, and Jeff Scher, independent filmmaker.

Friday, April 30, 3:00 p.m.

Program 3
Gregory Markopoulos as Mentor, Stan Brakhage as Hero

Friday, April 30, 7:00 p.m.

Program 4
Intimate Couplings

Saturday, May 1, 3:00 p.m.

Program 5
Transformations of Style: From Mise-en-Scene to Montage

Saturday, May 1, 7:00 p.m.

Program 6
Filmed Images as Found Footage: Stanzas of Music

Wednesday, May 5, 2:30 p.m.

Program 6
Filmed Images as Found Footage: Stanzas of Music

Wednesday, May 5, 6:00 p.m.

Program 5
Transformations of Style: From Mise-en-Scene to Montage

Friday, May 7, 3:00 p.m.

Program 7
Sonbert and Hitchcock: Narrative from a Woman's Point of View

Friday, May 7, 7:00 p.m.

Program 8
Cases in Point: Sonbert's Creative Interaction with Experimental Filmmakers: Abigail Child, Nathaniel Dorsky, and Jeff Scher

Saturday, May 8, 3:00 p.m.

Program 8
Cases in Point: Sonbert's Creative Interaction with Experimental Filmmakers: Abigail Child, Nathaniel Dorsky, and Jeff Scher

Saturday, May 8, 7:00 p.m.

Program 7
Sonbert and Hitchcock: Narrative from a Woman's Point of View

Acknowledgments

For the preservation and distribution of Sonbert's films, thanks are due to Ascension Serrano; David Callahan and Marie Nesthus of Donnell Library Media Center; Beth Copley of London Filmmakers' Co-op; Michael Friend and Mike Pogorzelski of Academy Film Archive; and Dominic Angerame and David Sherman of Canyon Cinema.

For the loan of additional films in the exhibition, we thank all of the filmmakers; Robert Beavers of The Temenos Project, Inc.; Canyon Cinema; Film-Makers' Cooperative in New York; The Museum of Modern Art; Ian Birnie; Ray Regis; and Brian Fox of Swank Motion Pictures.

For making this entire initiative possible, I wish to thank Randall Bourscheidt, Executive Director of the Alliance for the Arts, and Patrick Moore, Director of the Estate Project for Artists with AIDS. At the Guggenheim Museum, I appreciate the support of John G. Hanhardt, Maria-Christina Villaseñor, Lisa Ventry, and Jennifer Knox-White.

For timely advice and assistance, I thank Adrienne Mancía, Edith Kramer, Alan Bernheimer, William Graves, John Broderick, Wendy Appel, Jessica Green, James Stoller, Nathaniel Dorsky, Callie Angell, Maeva Aubert, Alena Goldberg, Derek Yip, and David Deitch; Ascension Serrano, my faithful counsel; and Jeff Scher, for keeping the flame of Warren's spirit alive by spending many magical hours viewing his films.

Unless otherwise noted, all photographs courtesy of Ascension Serrano, the Estate of Warren Sonbert.

Notes

1. Wendy Appel, who worked on *Amphetamine* with Sonbert, states that both were relatively unfamiliar with a motion-picture camera at the time. Interview with the author, May 2, 1998.
2. Byro, "Still NYU Student, Warren Sonbert's Wooster St. B.O.," *Variety*, Feb. 7, 1968, p. 17.
3. Noel Carroll, quoted in Jon Gartenberg, "The Avant Garde: Ernie Gehr & Warren Sonbert," *Films in Review* 33, no. 6 (June-July 1982), p. 370.
4. Sonbert, quoted by William Graves in his speech at Sonbert's memorial service, San Francisco, 1995.
5. Sonbert, "Point of View," *Spiral*, no. 1 (Oct. 1984), p. 5.
6. "Warren Sonbert Interviewed by David Ehrenstein, December 1978," *Film Culture*, nos. 70-71 (1983), p. 191.
7. Sonbert, quoted by Graves at Sonbert's memorial service, San Francisco, 1995.
8. Sonbert, program note for "Douglas Sirk and the Melodrama," Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, April 3-June 12, 1975.
9. Sonbert, "Hitchcock's *Marnie*" (1985), written notes for a lecture given at Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, July 8, 1986.
10. Sonbert, written notes for an entry in the 1992 Canyon Cinema catalogue.
11. Abigail Child, program note for "Small Retrospective in Conjunction with the Bad Gition at The New Museum," Anthology Film Archives, New York, April 1, 1994.
12. Sonbert, program note for screening of *Carriage Trade*, New American Filmmakers Series, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, October 11-17, 1973.

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This film series has been guest-curated by Jon Gartenberg and organized by John G. Hanhardt, Senior Curator of Film and Media Arts, and Maria-Christina Villaseñor, Assistant Curator of Film and Media Arts, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

This series and the preservation of Sonbert's work are organized in conjunction with The Estate Project for Artists with AIDS and the Academy Film Archive. The Guggenheim's film and video series is made possible with public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, a state agency.

Media support provided by

theAdvocate

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Front: Warren Sonbert in the 1960s.